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PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

.FOR ALBERTA..

Its Meaning and
Necessity.

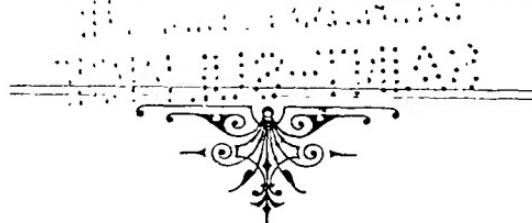
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PREFACE.



On the 22nd March, 1895, advantage was taken of the presence in Calgary of a large number of representative men from all parts of Alberta to hold a mass meeting to consider the propriety of taking action to obtain the early constitution of the western portion of the Northwest Territories into a Province, and so secure for its people their full rights as Canadian subjects, a number of which they do not now enjoy. By that meeting the movement was heartily endorsed. The result of the meeting was the formation of a Provisional Committee to take steps towards the organization of a representative League for the advancement of the movement. That Committee has decided that the best way of organizing such a League would be by the calling of a Convention of delegates from all parts of the Territory of Alberta and the westerly districts of the Territories of Saskatchewan and Assiniboia. Such a Convention will shortly be held. In the meantime, that the movement may be well understood and that the delegates to that Convention may be intelligently selected, it has been decided by the Committee to present shortly some of the reasons which have suggested the movement. It is with such object in view that this pamphlet has been prepared and distributed.



... Provincial Government ...

For Alberta.

ITS MEANING AND NECESSITY.

"Who would be Free, Themselves Must Strike the Blow."

The birthright of a British subject is self government. This principle, hammered out by centuries of conflict in Great Britain, has been extended to every corner of the Empire in a greater or lesser degree. It is based on the common-sense notion that every ordinarily reasonable human being knows best what he wants himself, and can best point out the method of attaining it, either by himself or in concert with others in like circumstances.

The British subject who leaves the settled haunts of civilization and goes forth to open up fresh tracts and add new provinces to the Empire, never imagines for a moment that in doing so he is relinquishing one jot or tittle of this right. For a while the necessities of the situation may lead him to acquiesce in a more irresponsible form of government than that to which he has been accustomed, but he regards this state of things as merely temporary, and looks with certainty to the time when every privilege of British citizenship will be handed to him unimpaired.

Such being the unquestioned state of the case, it is proposed in this little pamphlet, firstly, to examine our own position at present in Alberta; secondly, to investigate whether the time

has not already arrived for that position to be improved; thirdly, to inquire into the possible benefit which will accrue to the country by such an improvement in our status in the Dominion and Empire, ceded to us by the Central Power.

THE PRESENT POSITION.

At present, in common with the rest of the Territories, we are governed by a Lieutenant-Governor who resides nearly 500 miles away, at Regina, and a Legislative Assembly sitting at the same place, to which we furnish a contingent of 10 out of a total of 29 members. The powers of this Assembly are of a very limited nature. They have no authority to legislate for borrowing money on the credit of the Territories, or to regulate any local works and undertakings, or to incorporate any railway, steamboat, canal, transportation, telegraph, irrigation or insurance companies, even for purely Territorial objects within the limits of the Territories. Neither have they any power to make laws with regard to immigration into the Territories. Thus it will readily be seen that they

have no real control over the destiny and development of the country, which are entirely out of their hands. Our representatives have no power to pledge the credit of the Territories in

order to raise money for Territorial purposes, and cannot in consequence initiate any large or comprehensive scheme of any kind with a view to the benefit and progress of the country. But it is not only in the meagre power of our Territorial representatives that our inferiority consists. It is not only that, as a community we are deprived of the power to help ourselves. As part and parcel of the Dominion of Canada, we do not reap anything like all the benefits our position as such entitles us, nor as long as we remain in our present condition of Territorial infancy have we any chance of doing so. As individuals we contribute, man for man, a fully average share to the customs duties from which the revenue of the Dominion is chiefly derived. But all we received last year for our own use out of the revenue was a paltry \$30,000. This subsidy is given us by the Dominion Government. We have no constitutional claim upon the Federal revenue whatever. The Territorial Legislature has to take whatever sum is doled out to it and be thankful. It has no fixed income of its own and no power to borrow. It is a legal minor. Times may be hard, business paralyzed, the development of the country stagnant, but our local Legislature is powerless to help us. The powers which it should possess are in the hands of the Dominion House, among whose members not ten per cent. either know or care anything about the Northwest. Our mouthpiece in that House is the Minister of the Interior, to whose department we belong along with the lunatics and Indians. And it is not putting the case too strongly to assert that, with one notable exception, the Minister of the Interior, for the past decade, has simply been, so far as the Territories are concerned, the mouth-

piece of two or three permanent officials. They are our real rulers. Under the forms of constitutional government, we, freeborn British subjects, have no more to say in the making of the country which we have opened up, and which we are endeavouring under every kind of official discouragement to develop, than the peasants of Russia have to do with the proclamations of the court of St. Petersburg.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT.

What is the remedy for these evils? How can we gain our full rights and privileges as Canadians and British subjects? How can we change the present condition of discouragement and stagnation into which we have fallen, to one of renewed energy, hopefulness and prosperity? The constitution of the Dominion points the way and invites us to take it. It provides for the admission of new Provinces into confederation, expressly stating that such admission must be at the request of their inhabitants. It grants the new Provinces the full powers conceded to the old ones, the right to borrow money on their own credit, to initiate undertakings for their own benefit, to charter and subsidize railways within their own limits, to devise and carry out their own plans to attract immigration within their own borders. It leaves the destiny of the new Province to those who have the most thorough knowledge of her requirements and the greatest interest in her development, her own people. We should no longer have to sit helpless with a vast field of fine anthracite coal, the only known field in Canada, the only known field but one in North America, lying undeveloped at our very door for want of proper railway facilities to carry it to the market that is

waiting for it in the silver states across the line. We should no longer have to stand by and see our settlers in the semi-arid districts abandoning their farms in despair at a Government that will neither help them to irrigate nor let them help themselves. We could charter and subsidize railways to develop our magnificent mineral resources and to open up fresh tracts to the settler; we could set on foot comprehensive schemes of irrigation in our semi-arid districts; we could start our own government creameries, build the bridges necessary to facilitate the intercourse and commerce of our people, and by the attractions of the area of prosperity and activity which the very inception of these enterprises would create, induce increased immigration within our limits.

Again, instead of the paltry dole of twenty or thirty thousand dollars conceded to us by the generosity of the Federal Parliament, we, as a Province, would be in receipt of a regular revenue provided for us by the constitution of the Dominion under the enactments of the British North America Act.

This Act provides for fixed subsidies from the Federal to the Provincial Governments, which subsidies fall into four classes: First, those Provinces which are free from debt at the time of incorporation into the Dominion receive a subsidy on capital account. Manitoba receives from the Canadian Government the annual sum of \$160,000 on this ground. Secondly, a fixed amount exclusive of the salary of the Lieutenant Governor is yearly paid to each Province for the support of its Government and Legislature. Manitoba receives \$50,000 per annum on this account. Thirdly, an annual grant is made to each Province equal to 80 cents per head of the population as shown by the last decennial census

until the population amounts to 200,000 souls, at which amount such grant remains thereafter. And it may be noted that the Manitoba Act in estimating the population of that Province at 17000 souls in 1870 clearly included Indians in the total population entitled to this 80 cents per head. Fourthly, if, as in Manitoba, the vacant lards of the Province at the time of incorporation would remain vested in the Crown, for the use of the Dominion, Alberta would, like that Province, receive an additional subsidy on that account. The total amount of the subsidy to Manitoba this year (1895) figured in its estimates as published in the Free Press of Feb. 1st at \$418,267.31, forming by far the largest item among its sources of revenue. Taking these figures as a basis, although both our population and area being at least double that of Manitoba in 1870, we shou'd in consequence receive more generous treatment in the matter of the first and second class of subsidies, we should be drawing now from the Dominion Government an annual sum of at least \$150,000. When we should be receiving this as our right, how much longer do we intend to be humbly thankful for \$30,000 as a favour?

These, then, being the obvious advantages which would be the result of our scheme, what are the

OBJECTIONS TO THE SCHEME?

1. The most usual objection to the proposal that the time is ripe to receive Provincial Government which is met with among our own people, is that Provincial Government would mean taxation.

Now, as already has been pointed out, a regular annual subsidy is paid to each Province of the Dominion out of the Federal revenue for the support and maintenance of its Government

and Legislature; so that there is no truth in the objection that we should be taxed to keep up a Provincial Government any more than we are at present to support a Territorial one. If, on the other hand, it is meant by this objection that a Provincial Government would have power to levy taxes for other purposes, the answer is obvious. In the first place, it would lie entirely in our own hands whether we used this power or not. Secondly, they would in this respect have no more power than our present Territorial Legislature, to which the North West Act distinctly gives authority to raise money by direct taxation for Territorial purposes. So far, they have not found any occasion to use this power, nor is it likely a Provincial Government would require to do so, since we find, in the third place, that other Provinces manage to make both ends meet without using it. The Manitoba estimates for the current year show a total of receipts from various sources of \$1,581,444, but there is not a single item among them derived from direct taxation. If they can get on without taxing their people, under what necessity would a Provincial Legislature in Alberta find itself for resorting to this expedient?

2. It is argued that our present population is too small and that our general standing in the Dominion is too insignificant to warrant the Federal Government acceding to our demand to be raised to the dignity of a Province. We are told that even little Prince Edward Island would laugh at the idea of a Province with only one member in the Dominion House. In the absence of any fixed rule as to how large a population or how many members of Parliament a Canadian Territory must possess before it can claim a right to become a Province, all

that can be done is to follow the invariable constitutional practice of establishing a precedent; and the only precedent for the admission into the Dominion of any community in the least resembling ours is the case of Manitoba, all other Provinces having been Crown colonies previous to incorporation. And the case of Manitoba is fatal to the objection. Her area was smaller than ours, her ascertained resources and prospects of less importance, her population only 17,000—even at the estimate of the Manitoba Act which was 5,000 in excess of the reality—of whom only about 1500 were white, and her first seats in the Dominion House were granted by the very Act, which admitted her to incorporation, no less than four being given to her inconsiderable electorate in order to enable her to take her place in the Dominion with as much dignity as possible. Why should Alberta expect or experience a less generous mode of treatment? One thing is certain. If we are too few in number to become incorporated as a Province, we are too many to continue to exist much longer in this country as a Territory. If our present condition of stagnation and the present Government policy of *laissez faire* is to continue much longer, Alberta is already over populated; and the Ottawa officials, who refuse either to aid any projects tending to develop our latent resources or to give us the power to aid ourselves, had better cease their spasmodic efforts to bring people into it. This "spirited immigration policy" about which we hear so much, without a spirited development policy at the back of it, is worse than useless, it is positively mischievous. It only adds fresh victims to a population that is quite large enough to suffer as it is.

CONCLUSION.

If we are tired of this state of things (as who is not?); if we desire to gain the full management of our own affairs, and our full and rightful status as citizens of this Dominion, one thing is certainly necessary. Laying aside narrower aims and aspirations, we must make such an unanimous application to become incorporated as a Province as the Federal authorities can not choose but bear. The voice of our member is only one among 215; but the united demand of our 40,000 citizens, expressed in petitions, mass meetings and conventions, cannot help

but be heard. We must take the first step ourselves as one people. And, as we shall only be asking that which on every principle of reason and justice is our own, only one result can follow. The pretensions of Ontario and Quebec to know what we want better than we do ourselves, will speedily collapse before a show of resolute unanimity on our part, and the present attitude will speedily change to one of welcome to the last new Province of the Dominion—youngest in point of date, but designed, perhaps, in course of time to become the greatest and most important of them all.



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